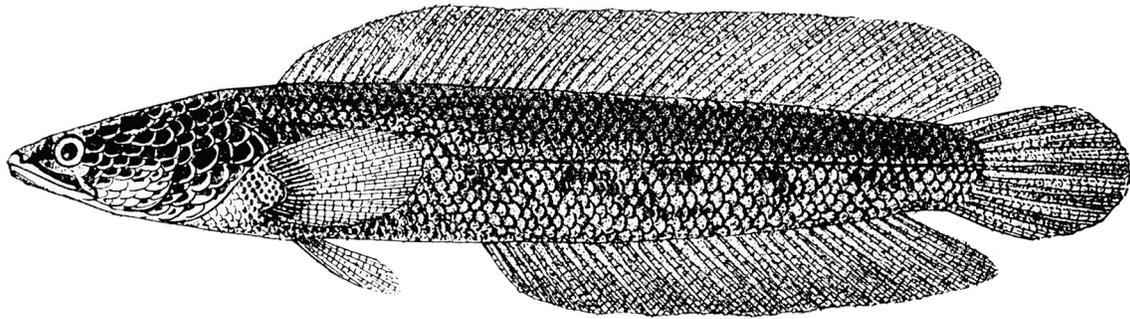
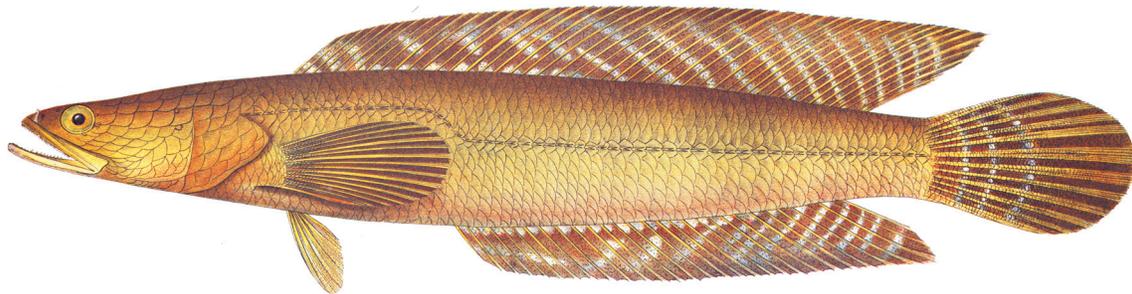


***Channa melanopterus* (Bleeker, 1855)**
Blackfinned Snakehead



After Weber and de Beaufort, 1922; image reversed from original



After Bleeker, 1878

Original description: *Ophicephalus melanopterus* Bleeker, 1855:420. Negende bijdrage tot de kennis der ichthyologische fauna van Borneo. Zoetwaterfischen van Pontianak en Banjarmasin. Natuurkd. Tijdschr. Neder. Indië 9:415-430. Type locality: Kapuas River, Pontianak, Borneo, Indonesia. Location of holotype reported as unknown, but located by Musikasinthorn (2000) as RMNH 6416.

Synonyms: No known synonyms (Ng and Lim, 1990). Often confused with *Channa marulius* (Ng and Lim, 1990; P. Musikasinthorn, personal commun., 2002), and *C. maruloides* (Lee and Ng, 1994).

Common name: blackfinned snakehead.

Native range: Kapuas River basin of Kalimantan (western Borneo) and possibly the southern tip of Sumatra (Roberts, 1989; Lee and Ng, 1994). These latter authors stated that records of this species from central Sumatra are misidentifications of *Channa maruloides*.

Introduced range: No introductions known.

Size: To at least 65 cm (Lee and Ng, 1994).

Habitat preference: No specific information, but appears to be a riverine species.

Temperature range: No specific information. Native range is equatorial to about 3° S.

Reproductive habits: No information located, but likely a nest builder that provides parental protection of eggs and fry.

Feeding habits: No information found. Likely a thrust predator as other snakeheads.

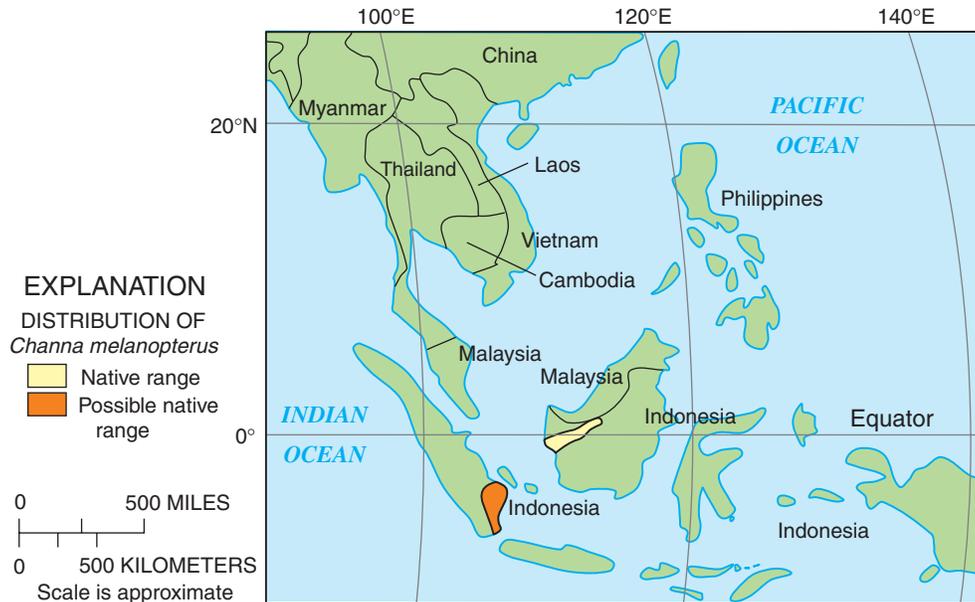
Characters: No patch of scales on gular region of head. Dorsal fin rays 44-48; anal fin rays 28-32. Lateral line scales 54-57; predorsal scales 13-15. Lateral line curves downward at lateral line scales 16-18.

Preopercular scales 5-8. Unfortunately, these characters are about equal to those of *Channa marulioides*. Lee and Ng (1994) stated that the only way to separate these two species is by coloration. *Channa marulioides* possesses an ocellated spot on the upper part of the caudal fin base, similar to that in *C. marulius*, and *C. melanopterus* lacks this ocellus. There are also differences in coloration of live individuals (Lee and Ng, 1994). *Channa marulioides* also differs from *C. melanopterus* in that the former often (but not always) possesses several patches of dark scales rimmed by white margins along the sides of the body (Lee and Ng, 1994).

Commercial importance in the United States: Rarely mentioned in aquarist-oriented websites and probably has been rarely, if ever, available for sale in the aquarium fish trade. Unknown from live-food fish markets.

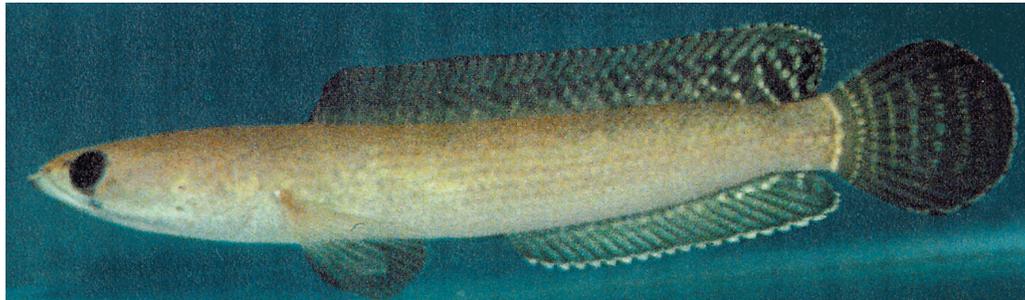
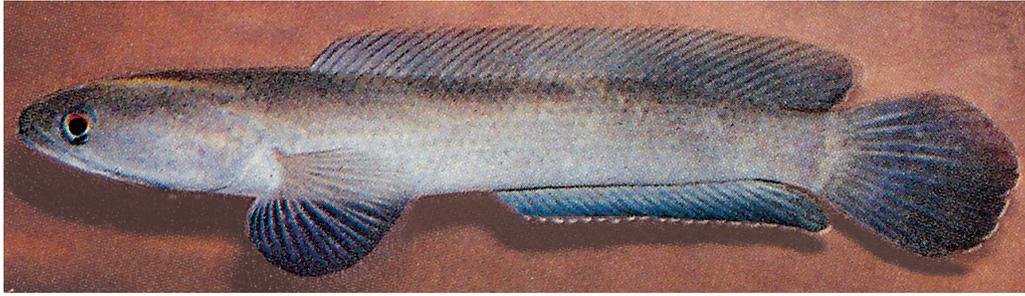
Commercial importance in native range: No information found. Considering its moderate size, it is probably available at local live-food fish markets.

Environmental concerns: Likely a thrust predator. This is a strictly tropical species that could only establish in extreme southern Florida, Hawaii, or warm thermal springs and their outflows if introduced.



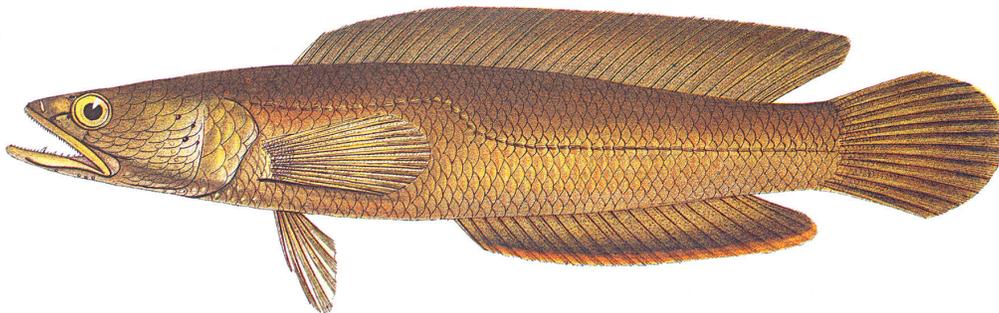
Channa melanopterus

***Channa melasoma* (Bleeker, 1851)**
Black Snakehead



Upper image: adult; photo by K.K.P. Lim. **Lower image:** subadult.

Reprinted with permission from P.K.L. Ng from Lee, P.G., and P.K.L. Ng. 1991.
The snakehead fishes of the Indo-Malayan region. *Nature Malaysiana* 16(4):112-129.



After Bleeker, 1878

Original description: *Ophicephalus melasoma* Bleeker, 1851:424. Vijfde bijdrage tot de kennis der ichthyologische fauna van Borneo, met beschrijving van eenige nieuwe soorten van zoetwatervisschen. *Natuurkd. Tijdschr. Neder. Indië* 2:415-442. Type locality: Sambas, western Borneo. Whereabouts of holotype unknown.

Synonyms: *Ophicephalus rhodotaenia* Bleeker, 1851:425.

Ophicephalus mystax Bleeker, 1853:188.

Ophicephalus melanosoma Bleeker, 1856:214.

Ophiocephalus melanosoma Günther, 1861:473.

Ophiocephalus baramensis Steindachner, 1901:3435, *fide* Roberts, 1989, Ng and Lim, 1990, and Rainboth, 1996. Species revalidated by Ng and others, 1996.

Note: Frequently misspelled *melanosoma* (Ng and Lim, 1990).

Common names: black snakehead; ikan bakak (Malay).

Native range: Chao Phraya River, near Bangkok, Thailand (misidentification?); Mekong River in Cambodia (Rainboth, 1996; misidentification?); rivers of south-eastern Sumatra; rivers of western Kalimantan, particularly the Kapuas basin (southern Borneo); Bangka and Belitung (Billiton) islands; Palawan Archipelago, Philippines (Inger and Kong, 1962; Roberts, 1989; Ng and Lim, 1990; Lee and Ng, 1991). Bean and Weed (1912) reported the species from Java, later challenged by Weber and de Beaufort (1922), and there is no evidence that it occurs there (Ng and Lim, 1990). Smith (1945) reported this species as rare in Thailand, and Lee and Ng (1994) stated that because of its preference for acidic waters, the species is more common toward the southern part of the Malay Peninsula. It is present but apparently rare in the North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest of the Malaysia Peninsula (Ng and others, 1992). Peter Ng (personal commun., 2003) reported occurrence of this species in the Golok area of southern Thailand. Records of this species from northern Borneo (Sarawak, Brunei, and Sabah) are misidentifications of the endemic *Channa baramensis* (Ng and others, 1996).

Introduced range: Uncertain. Presence of this species on Palawan (Kottelat, 1985; Roberts, 1989) may have resulted from an introduction. The same may be true in the Chao Phraya River, Thailand, and Mekong River, Cambodia, unless misidentified.

Size: To 35 cm (Inger and Kong, 1962).

Habitat preference: Prefers shaded, clear water forest streams with mud bottom and leaf litter, but is also found in turbid waters.

Reported to burrow into mud bottom when disturbed (Lee and Ng, 1991). Seems to prefer waters of pH 5-5.3 (Lee and Ng, 1994). Also occurs in middle parts of rivers. Capable of locomotion on land (Lee and Ng, 1994). Rainboth (1996) stated that it prefers “sluggish or standing waters” in the Mekong River basin.

Temperature range:

No specific information, but native range of *Channa melasoma* is tropical (Borneo) to subtropical (Thailand).

Reproductive habits: A nest builder like other channids; only one parent guards eggs and young (Ng and Lim, 1990).

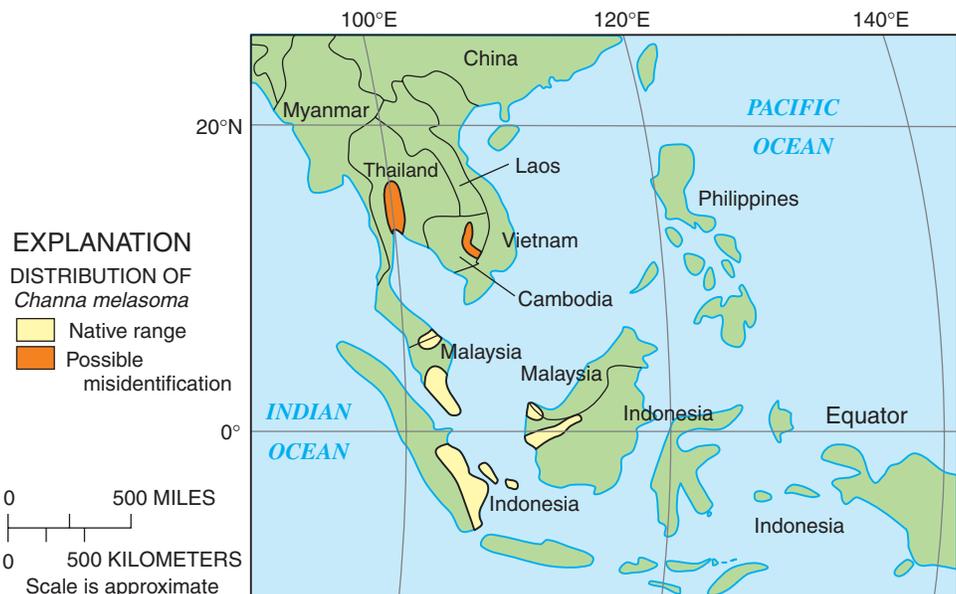
Feeding habits: A nocturnal thrust predator (Ng and Lim, 1990; Lee and Ng, 1991, 1994). Feeds on other fishes, lizards, crabs, insects and insect larvae (Inger and Kong, 1962; Ng and Lim, 1990; Rainboth, 1996).

Characters: No patch of scales on gular region. Dorsal fin rays 37-40; anal fin rays 22-25; pectoral rays 14-17. Lateral line scales 50-54; transverse scale rows from lateral line to dorsal fin origin 4-5½; transverse scale rows from lateral line to anal fin origin 7½. Color in preservative dark brown above, pale below, with fins dusky or dark and caudal fin usually barred. Many lateral scales with dark central spots (Inger and Chin, 1962). See account of *Channa baramensis* for characters that separate *C. melasoma* from this closely related species.

Commercial importance in the United States: Rarely mentioned on aquarist-oriented websites. Not known to have been imported as a live-food fish species.

Commercial importance in native range: Probably nil. This species is primarily nocturnal and reported to be difficult to capture (Lee and Ng, 1991). Rainboth (1996) noted that it is not found in markets in Cambodia.

Environmental concerns: This species is a nocturnal thrust predator, known to feed on other fishes as well as lizards, crabs, and insects (Lee and Ng, 1991).



Channa melasoma